

COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and
restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.
Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

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A Landmark Saved: Couts Restoration, 1930-1945 Part 2

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In March of 1935, Cave Coutts Jr. leased the old hotel to Margaret Adams Faulconer. The lease was for three years, beginning March 1, 1935 and ending on February 28, 1938. The terms of the lease stated that the building was "...to be used only for the purpose of an apartment house, dining room and the assembling place for historical, literary and similar societies."

Her business operated under the name, *Casa de Bandini*, and the timing seemed opportune since the California Pacific International Exposition had opened in the summer of 1935 at San Diego's Balboa Park. Both Faulconer and Coutts hoped to attract tourists from this world fair, and the building quickly became linked with the cultural traditions of a mythical Spanish past. Faulconer ran full-page advertisements in the *San Diego Union* featuring images of gaily-dressed dancers and guitar-strumming *caballeros* posing in the courtyard garden

"In all California there is no more romantic building than the Casa de Bandini, located

in Old Town San Diego. Here, where once the dashing Dons and lovely señoritas recreated the social grace of aristocratic Castille, in this one-time province of Spain, has endured for nearly a century and a quarter the tradition of a great family."

"Out of the pages of the past unto the stage of the present comes a restored and brilliant Casa de Bandini. In this transition from yesterday to today, nothing of its former charm or beauty has been lost."

"Much of California's history has centered in this truly magnificent specimen of real California architecture....It was the home of Don Juan Bandini, noted caballero. Today it is still owned by the Bandini family, in the person of Cave Coutts, grandson of Don Juan."

"On May 25, a few days previous to the opening of the California Pacific International (Exposition), the Casa de Bandini once again will assume its traditional place as the center of California's social gaiety."

During this time, the Casa de Bandini hosted a full repertoire of theatrical, historical and literary events. There were evening historical lectures and slide shows. San Diego State Teachers College offered off-campus workshops in the historic casa on "early California plays." Theatrical performances at the hotel often focused on the rich pageantry of events associated with the region's early history. *Heart's Desire*, a play about the Bandini family in 1846 during the U.S.-Mexican War, used the rear patio and balcony, glowing with footlights, as the stage for its evening performances. A review of the play characterized "Don Juan Bandini" as "a man of culture and refinement." "Bandini, his wife Dolores, and his three beautiful daughters, Ysidora, Arcadia and Josefa, were the center of social activities in San Diego," noted the reviewer. "Each night scores of their friends and acquaintances gathered to dance and enjoy the beauty of the Bandini home and garden." Plays like *Heart's Desire* and the promotional literature of the day helped popularize a legendary Bandini celebrated and remembered for his Old World gentility and rank—the "Prince of Hosts" in the words of historian and *San Diego Union* columnist Winifred Davidson.

